

Dr. Cowles looked into this miniature snake pit with delighted interest. "I would like to compare the locomotion with that of the sidewinder," he said. "Let's close the doors so it can't escape, and let it out on the floor."

Thereupon Dr. Herald closed one door and Dr. Cowles the other. Your correspondent, whose scientific curiosity has led him into numerous indiscretions, decided to stay and watch. Dr. Herald took a short stick with a hook of bent wire on one end, lifted the horned viper out of its box and deposited it on the floor. The reptile, after trying out the floor for traction, headed toward the north and began a rapid sidling motion to the west, the net result being a northwesterly slither toward Dr. Cowles, who reacted by raising one foot slightly and presenting the sole of his shoe. The viper thereupon reversed its field and sidled in a southeasterly direction toward Dr. Herald, who in turn sidled off toward the north, remarking admiringly, "Look at that snake go!" "Just like a sidewinder," observed Dr. Cowles. "Remarkable example of independent adaptation to a similar environment."

Your correspondent meanwhile had been doing some sidling of his own (this thing is catching), keeping at least eight feet between himself and the viper, and being prepared to leap to the top of the nearest table if the reptile so much as gave him a nasty look. (Considering the method of locomotion, one should probably really beware of a sidelong glance.)

Dr. Cowles, having satisfied himself regarding the details of viperine locomotion, recouped the snake with the hooked stick and held it chest-high while he inspected the horns above its eyes and other features of its anatomy. The viper, becoming increasing dissatisfied with things in general and herpetologists in particular, suddenly struck at Dr. Cowles so viciously that it lost its tail-hold on the stick and fell to the floor with a dull plop.

"I'm sorry—I hope it's not hurt," exclaimed Dr. Cowles solicitously.

"No, it's not hurt," Dr. Herald comforted him. "Now let's try the sand viper."

At this juncture, your correspondent, whose peregrinations had brought him conveniently near a door, opened it and sidled out, closing it carefully behind him.

### SCIENCE IN ACTION

THE ACADEMY's television program, *Science in Action*, is on the air again after several weeks of vacation. Beginning September 9, the program will be presented every Tuesday evening at 7 o'clock over station KRON-TV.

### NEW MEMBERS

THE FOLLOWING MEMBERS were elected by the Council at its meeting of August 14, 1952:

#### REGULAR MEMBERSHIP

Mrs. Grace K. Giese  
Mr. Watson L. Johns  
Commander Ernesto Roldan

#### STUDENT MEMBERSHIP

John Hendrickson  
David B. James  
Doris Lewis

#### ANNUAL SPONSOR

Mr. Porter Sesnon

# ACADEMY NEWS LETTER

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### CRUCIAL MOMENT

Central section of the star projector is hoisted into position  
in the Morrison Planetarium  
(See page 3)

*Published Monthly by*

CALIFORNIA ACADEMY OF SCIENCES

GOLDEN GATE PARK • SAN FRANCISCO

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## September Announcement

THE REGULAR SEPTEMBER MEETING of the California Academy of Sciences will be held in the Morrison Auditorium in the Academy's Hall of Science, Golden Gate Park, on Wednesday evening, September 17, 1952, at 8 o'clock. The program for the evening will be a lecture and the presentation of an original koda-chrome film entitled *Jungle Island*, by Dr. Lloyd G. Ingles, Professor of Zoology at Fresno State College.

During his sabbatical leave this past year, Dr. Ingles and his family traveled and studied in Mexico and Central America, spending three months on Barro Colorado, where they took many pictures of the interesting wildlife. The picture, *Jungle Island*, includes some of the tropical plants and their struggle to reach the light, many kinds of insects with particular emphasis on the ants and termites and animals that feed on them. Some of the vertebrate animals shown are tapirs, coatis, sloths, and armadillos, including the rare Central American armadillo, of which this is the first record on the island. Others are a caecilian, coral snake, honey creepers, toucans, and tree frogs.

This will be the first showing of this picture in California, and Academy members and their friends are cordially invited to attend.

### THIRTY YEARS OF SERVICE

THIRTY YEARS AGO, in the annual report of the Department of Botany, Curator Alice Eastwood wrote: "Mrs. E. C. Sutcliffe has taken charge of our collection of hepatics. . . ." Ever since that time Mrs. Sutcliffe has not only attended to the Academy's collection of this group of mosses, but she also collected, determined, and exchanged California specimens. Everything that has gone into this work has been done with no expense to the Academy. Leading American hepaticologists will attest the contribution Mrs. Sutcliffe has made by her devoted service to Botany, and the Academy takes this opportunity to express grateful appreciation.

### SEARCH TAKES BOTANIST OVER 4,000 MILES

ON HIS RECENT TRIP through Oregon and Washington in search of thistles, Mr. John Thomas Howell, Curator of Botany, traveled 4,353 miles by car, to say nothing of the additional foot and some boat travel necessary to obtain the 528 specimens which he brought back to the Academy. Some of these were so large that four to seven sheets were needed to press one complete plant. They are to be used in the descriptive accounts of the tribes of western thistles which Mr. Howell is preparing for the forthcoming volume of LeRoy Abrams' *Illustrated Flora of the Pacific States*.

During the trip, which lasted exactly one month, Mr. Howell had opportunity to enjoy several outstanding localities and adventures which he describes

with great enthusiasm and interest. For example, he mentioned the particularly interesting view overlooking the mouth of the Columbia River from Saddle Mountain State Park in Oregon, where the open, rocky slopes of the mountain were covered with wild flowers—including the thistle he expected to find; the spectacular scenery furnished by the vertical basaltic cliffs of the Grand Coulee, carved by the Columbia River in its prehistoric course; the thrill of looking down the deepest canyon on the North American continent—that of the Snake River as seen from the summit of Hat Point; and the unusual experience of traveling by mail boat 32 miles upstream from the mouth of the Rogue River to Agness.

### INSTALLATION OF THE STAR PROJECTOR BEGINS

THE INSTALLATION of the central section of the planetarium projector in its final position in the Morrison Planetarium took place on Friday morning, August 22, 1952, in an atmosphere of anticipation, mingled with anxiety, satisfaction, and relief, especially on the part of those who have put so much into its creation during these past five years. With alert, careful handling, the group of nine or ten men rolled the one and one-half ton section of the instrument along from its birthplace in the Museum's shop, up one floor by elevator, and across exhibition galleries to the projection room. There it was lifted from the wheeled cart to its permanent cradle some eight feet higher.

This momentous occasion was recorded by the photographer, who took his position at various levels all the way from sitting on the floor to climbing as high as scaffolding would permit. Many interested spectators also witnessed the event, but departed as soon as the excitement of the moment had passed, leaving those responsible for this outstanding technical creation to their own thoughts and to face the mountain of detail work yet to be done before the entire projector is assembled and ready for use in presenting shows to the public.

As this *News Letter* goes to press, we learn that the drive motors are all connected and in operation.

### FUN WITH VIPERS

ON AUGUST 5, Dr. Charles E. Von Geldern of Sacramento donated to the Academy two vipers recently arrived from Egypt. One was the common sand viper (*Cerastes vipera*), the other was the horned viper or asp (*Cerastes cornuta*), alleged by some historians to be the serpent that assisted in the death of Cleopatra. (Others claim that Cleo's asp was the Egyptian cobra.)

On August 6, your correspondent happened to be wandering through the Aquarium when whom should he meet but Dr. Ray B. Cowles, eminent herpetologist from the University of California at Los Angeles. Dr. Cowles was looking for Dr. Earl S. Herald, one of his former students and quite a snake and lizard man in his own right. Your correspondent rashly offered to conduct Dr. Cowles to Dr. Herald's office. Dr. Herald greeted his former professor with enthusiasm, then said, "Look what we have here." Thereupon he turned to a metal box, about eighteen inches square, and proceeded to unveil Dr. Von Geldern's gift.